Robin Hood and the Very Confused Deer

By Jonathan Olvera

It was hot.

Robin Hood sat in a pasture, squinting at the sun as it blazed a hole straight through the sky and into his skull. Sweat rolled down his back. His bow lay across a mossy stone, gathering more heat than a roast chicken at a noble's feast.

About fifteen yards away, a young deer stood nibbling grass. It looked plump. Tasty, even.

Robin lifted his bow halfway, then sighed and dropped it again. "Nay," he muttered. "I'd rather roast than run in this heat."

Besides, the deer was standing near a patch of wild rice and hops — fine ingredients for ale. If the deer fell into the brew, it might ruin the flavor. Robin couldn't have that.

It would've been a peaceful afternoon if not for the man in blue doing *very weird things* near a mirror.

Robin frowned. A tall mirror leaned crookedly between two stones. Beside it, a man in a blue tunic poked the dirt with what looked like a bundle of walking sticks. Occasionally he muttered something like, "No, no, that's too much carrot," or "One turnip, two turnips, zap."

Robin stood and called out: "Say, man!"

The sorcerer jumped, startled. "What? Who?"

"Thou there! Yes, you! What doth thou… earn-est? Or… conjure-est?"

The man looked up, blinking behind round spectacles. "I'm changing the weather."

"Are you now?" Robin said, hands on hips. "Looks more like you're poking salad."

The man pointed a stick at the mirror. "This mirror regulates sunbeams. If I get the angle just right, I can make it snow."

Robin wiped sweat from his brow. "In July?"

"Don't look now," the man said with a dramatic flare of his arms. "One… two… three… *POOF!*"

With a very unimpressive *poof* and a slightly louder *plop*, the sorcerer turned into a deer.

He blinked, wobbled on his new legs, looked down at his hooves, and then took off into the woods like someone had just invented lion-shaped arrows.

Robin stared. Then looked at the mirror.

Then back at the sticks.

Then at the empty spot where the wizard had once stood.

"…What in the name of Friar Tuck's left boot just happened?"

He walked over to the mirror, squinted at his reflection, and poked the surface. It had turned to stone. Solid as a tax collector's heart.

"Well," Robin said, dusting his hands, "that's probably fine."

Still, the situation felt… magical. And not in the good way, like when you find three extra sausages at breakfast. No — this was the *confusing, possibly cursed* kind of magic.

"Maybe I've inhaled too much hop pollen," Robin muttered, poking around the rice stalks for any suspicious mushrooms. He even sniffed a few. "Smells like salad. Tastes like regret."

The wind picked up.

Then something weird happened. Again.

The mirror flickered. It *shouldn't have*, seeing as it was stone now. But flicker it did. And Robin saw… himself.

Only older. With a bigger beard. And significantly less hair on top.

The reflection leaned forward and spoke. "Don't let him stay a deer," it said in a haunting, echoing voice. "Seriously. He owes me five gold."

Robin jumped back, knocking over a bag of hops. "Sweet Nottingham—!"

Then the mirror cracked. Crumbled. Turned into a pile of rock dust and one very confused squirrel, who scampered away like it owed taxes.

Robin stared at the pile, then down at the bundle of sticks the wizard had dropped.

"Well," he said, grabbing the sticks. "Guess I'm rescuing a deer today."

Two hours later…

Robin crept through the forest, crouched low. He held a fistful of rice in one hand and a carrot in the other.

“Here, magic deer…” he whispered. “Come out, little sorcerer…”

There was a rustle.

A deer popped its head out from behind a tree.

Robin squinted. “Is that you?”

The deer made a sound that could only be described as "*magic panic*."

It tried to run.

Robin tossed a carrot.

The deer stopped.

“Thought so,” Robin said, grinning.

He held up the bundle of sticks. “You turn back with these, right? Come on. Nod if yes.”

The deer just looked confused. Then it sneezed. A bunch of glitter came out.

“Well, that’s new,” Robin muttered.

Eventually, he coaxed the deer back to the pasture. He laid the sticks in a circle, stacked the leftover hops, and placed what was left of the mirror dust in the center.

“Okay. Magic stuff. Hocus pocus. Please don’t explode.”

He poked the sticks.

Nothing.

He tapped the deer on the nose.

Nothing.

He sighed. “Alright, listen. If you can hear me in there, think really hard about your taxes. That usually brings people back.”

The deer shuddered.

Suddenly — *Poof!*

The man in the blue tunic was back — lying on his back, blinking at the sky, and covered in hop vines.

Robin grinned. “You owe me a beer.”

The man groaned. “And five gold…”

Robin helped him up. “Next time, maybe try weather magic *indoors*?”

The sorcerer nodded weakly. “And avoid mirrors. And deer. And talking to men with bows.”

Robin patted him on the back. “Don’t worry, friend. Your secret’s safe with me.”

Then he held up a bottle of freshly brewed ale — cold, golden, and fizzing at the top.

“Now *this* is magic.”